

Story 1655 (1974 Tapes 28-29) Narrator: İslâm Erdener, in
40s; Karakalpak
hak aşığı

Location: Kümbetli village,
not part of a kaza
but attached directly
to city of Kars, Kars
Province

Date: August

Cinderlad¹

Once there was and twice there was not, when the sieve was in the straw, when the camel was a town crier and the frog was a barber, when the cat had a female kitten, when the keeper of the bath did not have a bath dipper and the woodcutter had no axe. Back in that time I saw a man who lacked the central part of his cummerbund.

Well, back in those days there was a very poor family that lived in the most run-down part of the city. They had several daughters² but only one son. They called this

¹What are sometimes called "Male Cinderella" tales sometimes have relatively few elements that parallel conventional Cinderella accounts. Even the common element of sleeping in the cinders or ashes is different in the male and female versions. Cinderella's sleeping there is a matter of abuse or neglect, while Cinderlad, the pet child in the family, chooses to sleep there.

²The narrator says literally "three or five" daughters, "three or five" being used generally for "a few" or "a small number."

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Cinderlad because he liked to sit or lie in the cinders at the edge of the fireplace.

About twenty kilometers from that city there was a range of mountains known as "Sıralı Peaks." There were forty thieves who hid out in those mountains. One day the chief of this band of thieves said to his men, "Tonight we shall make a surprise raid on the city." Because they had attacked the impoverished part of the city, they found lit-

that was worth stealing. In order not to depart empty-handed, they went to Cinderlad's home and kidnaped that boy and took him to their place in the mountains. He was at that time twenty-two or twenty-three years old. The boy became a general servant of the thieves. While they were away during the day, he would clean the house, cook the food, and carry the water that was needed. When they returned at night, he would take their horses to the stable where he would feed and water those animals. Then he would

the tables for the dinner of the thieves and serve them their food. Those were Cinderlad's duties at the home of the forty thieves.

Days passed in so much the same way that it almost seemed that they were all the same day. There is an old

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proverb which says, "If you keep two horses together for a while, they will each acquire some of the other's behavior." The boy said to himself one day, "These thieves were each born from a human being just as I was. Why then should they be rich and I be poor?"

One day when the forty thieves again left home to carry on their thefts, Cinderlad set to work at once, cleaning the house and cooking the food as quickly as possible. Taking some strained yoghurt, the boy smeared it all over a red house, thus changing its color and making it look very different. He disguised the horse in this way, and he disguised himself by covering his head and face. Then after buckling on a spare sword of the bandit chief, he rode forth in the direction from which the thieves always returned home at night. In a narrow gorge in the mountains, Cinderlad encountered the forty thieves. Because only one thief at a time could pass through that gorge the young man was able to attack them singly. As each thief went through the narrow place, he was beaten by the flat side of Cinderlad's sword. He then returned home and began to lay out the evening meal

About thirty minutes later the forty thieves arrived home. They said to Cinderlad, "Bring the food quickly!

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Today a very brave young man came along and pummeled all of us!"

This continued for five days, ten days, fifteen days. Finally, however, the bandit chief discovered that it was Cinderlad who was attacking them repeatedly. He said nothing to Cinderlad about this, but he called his men together to discuss this matter. He said, "Oh, friends, it is Cinderlad who is responsible for the beatings we have been receiving recently. We should now kill him, but how can we do this? He is so strong that he could defeat any one of us. In fact, he could probably defeat all forty of us in a battle. We must think of a trick to kill him.

About three or five kilometers from the home of the thieves there was an abandoned garden with a very special fountain at its center. It was special in that no one who touched the waters of that fountain ever escaped alive from that garden. (Why was that so? I shall explain that to you later. The bandit leader said to Cinderlad, "Son, take this jug to an abandoned garden that is three or five kilometers down the road in that direction. Bring us a jug of water from the fountain that you will find at the center of that garden." Cinderlad went to the abandoned garden and began filling the water jug at the fountain.

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He was then attacked by something that sprang upon him with a great roar. Cinderlad immediately grasped his attacker. The creature struggled to escape but could not do so until it pushed a golden bowl between itself and Cinderlad. The bowl fell to the ground, and at this point in the scuffle, the boy's adversary was able to flee. Taking the jug of water and the golden bowl, Cinderlad started home with them. At about this same time, the bandit chief said to some of his men, "Go outside and see if Cinderlad is coming." They were all shocked to discover that the young man was indeed returning. The chief then said, "If he is still alive, it means that he filled his jug at some fountain other than the one to which I sent him. I can determine that for certain, for I know the taste of the water that flows from the fountain in the abandoned garden

When Cinderlad returned, he poured some water from the jug into the golden bowl and handed the bowl to the bandit chief. After drinking a few swallows, the bandit chief said, "Yes, this water really did come from that special fountain

The other thieves then also tasted the water and said, "Yes, you are right. He really went to that special fountain and took this water from it."

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A short while later the bandit chief called his men together and said, "Oh, friends, this young man could cause us great trouble. Let us share our wealth and cease our banditry. Let us all return to the family homes from which we originally came." Calling Cinderlad to him, the leader said, "Son, we have decided to give up this way of life and return to the homes from which we came."

Cinderlad said, "All right. I shall leave this place with you, and when we all separate from each other, I shall also go back to my own home

They left that hiding place in the mountains and returned to the city. As they were entering that city, however, a Jew saw the extremely beautiful golden bowl in the hands of Cinderlad. The Jew went at once to the police and reported, "I had a very beautiful and very valuable golden bowl which was stolen from me some time ago, but today I saw that bowl in the hands of a certain young man here in this city."

The police arrested Cinderlad and his companions and took them to the nearest court. The judge asked the Jew, "Is this your bowl?"

"Yes, it is my bowl," said the Jew

Turning then to Cinderlad, the judge asked, "Is this your bowl?"

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"Yes, it is my bowl," answered Cinderlad.

The judge then asked, "How can we determine which of you is telling the truth?"

The Jew said, "Your Honor, this is an extraordinary bowl. In fact, it is unique. If Cinderlad can find another bowl like it, then this bowl can be his. If he cannot bring another exactly like it, then this bowl is mine, and it will be clear that he stole it from me

The judge agreed to this proposal made by the Jew, he asked, "How can we trust him to leave here and return again?"

At this point Cinderlad said, "I have friends here. Hold these men here as hostages and feed them well until my return. I shall not be gone for long.

Everyone agreed to this arrangement, and Cinderlad departed again from the city. He walked and walked, very angry all of the time about what had happened to him. At last he entered another city. There he knocked on the door of a large house. When a lady opened the door, he asked her, "Will you accept me as a guest of Allah?"³

³This expression means literally, "Will you accept me as a guest for the sake of Allah?" An appeal made on that basis is a psychological stratagem. Few virtuous people are likely to reject the opportunity to do something for the sake of Allah.

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lady answered, "Yes, of course I shall, son. Come in." She gave him some food to eat and some tea to drink. When the woman's husband returned home, he too welcomed Cinderlad, and then he spoke briefly to his wife about something else. The woman began to cry, and soon she was sobbing loudly.

Curious about what was disturbing her, Cinderlad finally asked her, "Oh, mother, what are you crying about?"

"Oh, Cinderlad, the son of our padishah died recently, and there has been something strange happening at the place where he was buried. Each night a guard is assigned to protect his tomb, but so far not a single one of those guards has survived until morning. I am crying because tonight it is the turn of my husband to guard the tomb.

"Oh, mother," said Cinderlad, "would it be possible for me to go in his place to guard the tomb?"

took Cinderlad to the palace and were admitted into the presence of the padishah. After considering Cinderlad's request for a moment, the padishah said, "Very well! You may go and guard my son's grave tonight.

That evening Cinderlad went to the grave and sat alongside the tombstone. When night came it was perfectly quiet, and there was no one anywhere near the grave except

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Cinderlad. Close to daybreak, however, there was a loud sound heard nearby, and Cinderlad hid himself immediately. He then saw approaching the grave a fairy girl carrying a long stick. She touched the grave with that stick, and the grave opened. Then she touched the corpse with the stick, and the corpse revived. The fairy girl then asked the son of the padishah, "Will you marry me?"

"No, I will not," he answered.

After the fairy girl had asked the same question three times and had received the same answer each time, she touched the prince again with her stick, and his body fell back lifeless. Then she touched the grave with that same stick, and it closed once again. Just as she was about to fly away, however, she was seized by Cinderlad and held very tightly. The girl struggled and struggled to break loose, but she could not escape the grip of Cinderlad. In her efforts to do so, she dropped her magic stick. Cinderlad then let go of her in order to grab that stick.

Some time after the fairy girl had departed, dawn arrived. Cinderlad then touched the grave with the magic stick, and the grave reopened. Then he touched the body of the prince with the stick, causing the prince to come to

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life again. It seems that the prince had not actually died but had been placed under a deathlike spell by the fairy girl. Cinderlad took off his coat to cover the prince and then took him back to his home in the palace.

The padishah was astounded and delighted to see his son alive and well. The padishah said to Cinderlad, "Son, wish from me anything that you would like. Whatever you wish I shall provide for you."

Cinderlad showed the golden bowl to the padishah and said, "I should like to have another bowl exactly like this one."

The padishah looked at that bowl and said, "Son, I shall give you a countless number of gold coins instead of such a bowl."

"No, I do not want them," said Cinderlad. He then left that city in disappointment and began traveling again.

After a while he came to a city that lay on the shore of a sea. When he arrived there, he saw that the citizens of that city were running toward a dock which an incoming ship was approaching. As the ship drew closer to the dock however, it suddenly sank. Everyone along the shore began shouting and crying. One person exclaimed, "My father was aboard that ship!"

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Another said, "Oh, my poor mother and brother were on that ship!"

Cinderlad asked a man standing near him, "What is going on here?"

The man answered, "Oh! Oh! We don't really know what causes every ship that comes here from Istanbul to sink."

Cinderlad said, "Take me to your padishah." When he was shown into the presence of the padishah, he asked that ruler, "What would you give me for preventing a disaster like this from happening? If I bring the next Istanbul ship to the dock completely unharmed, would you give me what I would ask from you?"

The padishah said, "Son, if you can do that, I shall give you anything that you want."

Cinderlad went as a passenger in the next ship that left that city to pick up a cargo in Istanbul. When the boat had been loaded with food supplies, textiles and other goods, it set out on its return voyage. Of course, all of the people in the city from which the ship had come were eagerly awaiting its return. After the ship had gone some distance, Cinderlad went to the captain and said, "When we reach the place where all previous ships sank,

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you are to fasten a chain around my waist and throw me overboard. If I should tug upon the chain three times in a row, you are to pull me back up from the sea at once.

When the ship reached the dangerous place, Cinderlad was lowered into the sea. He waited there for whatever would come along to attack the ship. After a while a fairy came along, attached the hooks it was carrying to the bottom of the ship, and began to pull the ship down toward the bottom. But Cinderlad immediately caught the fairy and held it tightly. The fairy tried and tried to escape Cinderlad's grasp but could not do so. During the struggle a ring was wrenched off the finger of the fairy. When Cinderlad saw this, he grabbed the ring and let the fairy go. He then pulled on the chain three times and was pulled up from the bottom of the sea. As a result of Cinderlad's efforts, the ship arrived safely at the dock.

Everyone in that city was greatly pleased that the ship had completed its voyage. The padishah was especially happy, and he said to Cinderlad, "Oh, son, ask from me whatever you wish!"

Cinderlad said, "Oh, my padishah, I should like to have another golden bowl exactly like this one," and he

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held up the bowl which he had taken from the fairy girl at the fountain in the abandoned garden.

The padishah said, "I shall give you a camel load of gold instead of such a bowl."

I do not want a camel load of gold," answered Cinderlad, and he left that city at once.

He traveled over hill and dale. He traveled seven years and an autumn. He finally became tired, however, and so he sat down to rest. Taking some bread from his bag, he began to eat it. While he was doing so, some bread crumbs fell to the ground, and at once millions of ants were attracted to that spot. While he was looking in great surprise at all of these ants, he noticed that the soil there was very soft. He started to dig into that soft soil with his stick, and after he had done this for a short while, he uncovered a door. When he opened that door, he found inside it some steps leading downward. Descending those steps to the bottom, he came upon another door. Beyond that second door was a stable equipped to hold three horses, and in the middle of that stable was a large pile of manure. Being a very intelligent young man, Cinderlad immediately hid himself in that manure pile.

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After a while three girls, laughing and talking entered the stable. The two younger girls said to the third, "Well, oldest sister, tell us about your recent experiences

The oldest sister began at once to grant their request. She said, "I had a very beautiful garden which had at its center a fountain. I used to kill everyone who tried to draw water from that fountain. One day a very brave young man came to that fountain and began to fill his jug. I tried to kill him, too, but I was not able to do so. In fact, I just barely escaped from his hands and saved my life. In the struggle I lost my golden bowl to him. If he were here right now, I would marry him."

the oldest and youngest sister said to the third girl, "Now, middle sister, tell us what adventures you have had since we all met this way."

The middle sister said, "I fell in love with the son of a padishah and wanted him to marry me. I was so angry at him that I placed a magic spell on him that gave him the appearance of a dead man. His parents had him buried. Because his death was so sudden, and because no one could explain it, they suspected that there was something strange about it. They therefore placed a guard at his grave every

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night. I would go to his grave every night, kill the guard, and then ask the padishah's son if he would marry me. But one night after I had revived the padishah's son, a very brave young man came to the tomb and saved the prince from me. I tried to kill that brave young man, too, but he was stronger than I was, and I just barely saved my own life by fleeing from him. In our struggle, however, I lost my magic stick. If that brave young man were here right now, I would marry him.

Then the two older sisters said, "Tell us, youngest sister, what interesting adventures have you had?"

The youngest girl said, "For some time I controlled all of the shipping on the Black Sea. Whenever I wanted to do so, I used to pull an entire ship beneath the waves and then take all of the goods that it had been carrying. One day when I was just about to sink another ship, a very strong young man came along the bottom of the sea and began to fight with me. I finally saved my life by wrenching myself free from him, but as I did this my magic ring was pulled off my finger into his hand. If that young man were here right now, I would marry him.

After Cinderlad had heard the accounts of these three girls, he threw among them the golden bowl, the magic stick

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the magic ring. This confused the three sisters, and all said together, "Here are the very things that we lost!"

Cinderlad then crawled out of the manure pile and cleaned himself. After serving him tea and coffee, the girls asked Cinderlad, "What do you want from us?"

"I should like to have another golden bowl just like this one. Do you have one?"

The oldest girl answered, "I shall not give you one but forty bowls just like this one. Here! Take all of them!"

Taking these golden bowls, Cinderlad said, "I must now leave briefly, for I have some important business to which I must attend. After taking care of that, I shall return."

Putting the bowls and Cinderlad on her back, the girl began to fly toward the city. (She was a fairy, you know. When they arrived in the city, the girl transformed herself into a bird and perched in a tree to wait for the young man.

Cinderlad went to the court and made a request of the judge. "Please ask the Jew if his golden bowl is unique or if there are other golden bowls like it in this world."

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When the Jew was asked this question, he said, "No, there is only one golden bowl like that." Then Cinderlad showed them the forty bowls which were all exactly alike. When the Jew saw those bowls, each just like all the rest, he suddenly burst and died.⁴ Cinderlad then gave one golden bowl to each of the forty bandits, who then proceeded to their homes.

The oldest sister then returned to her former shape and flew back to her home with Cinderlad on her back. There the three sisters discussed what they should do about Cinderlad. They finally all agreed that the oldest sister should marry him, for she was the one who had seen him first. The two were soon married, and they settled down to a very comfortable life together.

After quite some time had passed, Cinderlad one day

⁴Most modern readers would suppose that the narrator is here speaking figuratively, that the man died of a heart attack or a stroke or some other sudden and fatal disease. This, however, is probably not the case. Although there is no Aarne-Thompson type or motif for the literal bursting of human beings, this does occur in Turkish tales. One ATON tale has two evil-eyed men burst when they encounter each other. Another has a dragon literally burst when it sees its own image in a huge mirror placed in its path.

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said to his wife, "I miss my parents very much. I want to go and visit them."

His wife said, "Very well, you may go, but there is one thing that you must not do. You must never reveal to anyone our secret. If you do, you will regret it."

Cinderlad said, "No, I shall never reveal our secret. Then he set out at once to visit his parents.

he arrived at his parents' house, they were delighted to see their son again after such a long absence. Cinderlad gave them a great amount of money, and they spent many happy days together. One day, however, his mother and father said to him, "Well, now, son, what kind of work do you do? How do you earn such a good living?"

Cinderlad answered, "I am sorry, but I cannot tell you that." But his mother kept asking that question, and she insisted on an answer until Cinderlad finally revealed the fact that he was married to a fairy girl.

As soon as her secret was thus revealed, Cinderlad's wife disappeared immediately from this world, never to return. Bad fortune fell upon Cinderlad, and he lost everything that he had. That is where our story ends.

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Our master's name is Hıdır.⁵ All of our ability depends upon him.

Four apples fell from the sky. One of them is for Ahmet Bey [Uysal]. One of them is for his professor friend [Warren Walker]. One of them is for my brother [a front-line member of small audience]. And the last one is for Âşık İslam Erdener.⁶

⁵His literal poetic and musical mentor was the son of Âşık Şenlik. Was that son named Hıdır? Or is this a reference to the saint named Hızır in Turkish, Hıdr or Khidr in Arabic? Hızır played many different roles since very ancient times, but to many Turks now he plays that of Moslem saint.

⁶This is one of the most popular terminal devices with which to end a folktale.